

MENDELSSOHN'S "ITALIAN" SYMPHONY

CLASSICAL KUSC @ PACIFIC SYMPHONY

Carl St. Clair, conductor
Paul Huang, violin
John Van Driel, host

Bruch

VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 1 IN G MINOR

Prelude: Allegro moderato

Adagio

Finale: Allegro energico

Paul Huang

Mendelssohn

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN A MAJOR, "ITALIAN"

Allegro vivace

Andante con moto

Con moto moderato

Saltarello: Presto

Friday, March 22, 2019 @ 8 p.m.

Seegerstrom Center for the Arts
Renée and Henry Seegerstrom Concert Hall

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PROGRAM NOTES

Ludwig van Beethoven:

“Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo” from String Quartet No. 16



There is no music more heroic than Beethoven's. His symphonies, concertos and opera have an air of monumentality and reflect humanity's noblest aspirations. But toward the end of his life, Beethoven turned inward,

using the intimate scale of the piano sonata and the string quartet to create music that is equally profound, if less public, than the forms that mobilize the full orchestra. Many of the composer's admirers feel that these late works are his most personal, most profound, most transcendent utterances.

Beethoven's String Quartet No. 16 is the last music he wrote, and its slow, hymn-like *lento* movement—the longest movement of the quartet, full of feeling, yet also serenely resolute—can be heard as the composer's farewell to life on earth. He finished the quartet in October of 1826, about four months before his death. He was aware that he wouldn't write another, and appended this note with it for his publisher: “Here, my dear friend, is my last quartet. It will be the last; and indeed it has given me much trouble ... And that is the reason why I have written the motto: ‘The difficult decision—Must it be?—It must be, it must be!’”

Beethoven was much in Mahler's thoughts, and in this *lento* we can hear the progenitor of Mahler's symphonic adagios.

Like Mahler, Beethoven uses this very slow, reflective pace to contemplate the eternal. In doing so, he leads us to a place of spiritual peace.

Max Bruch:

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor



“The G Minor concerto again! I could not bear to hear it even once more. My friends, play the second concerto or the *Scottish Fantasy* for once!”

We might not agree with this outburst—in

fact, Bruch's Concerto No. 1 in G minor continues to be Bruch's most popular work, and one of the most popular violin concertos in the repertory. But according to his son Ewald, this was Bruch's reaction after receiving yet another invitation to conduct it. He had completed the concerto in 1866; its premiere, with Otto von Königslow as soloist, was followed by intensive revision. Almost from the moment of the new version's premiere with the esteemed Joseph Joachim as soloist, the concerto was hugely popular, and Bruch never escaped the shadow of its success.

Born in 1838, Bruch completed the concerto in 1866 and conducted its premiere that same year, revising it with the assistance of the violinist Joseph Joachim. The revised version, which is the performing edition we know today, was first performed in January 1868—beginning the concerto's oddly jinxed history.

Though he kept a copy of the score for

himself, Bruch sold the original score and its rights to his publisher, and in the economic turmoil surrounding World War I, it passed in and out of the hands of various Bruch associates until its final sale to the collection of Pierpont Morgan Library. The one element all these transfers had in common was that they did not benefit Bruch in any way.

The concerto was performed throughout Europe and America in Bruch's own lifetime, offering audiences precisely what they wanted in a violin concerto: singing lines, passionate phrasing, extreme dynamics, overarching drama, double- and triple-stops. The concerto is marked by Bruch's characteristic alternation of moods: simmering, soulful melodies build to explosive outbursts of passion. Its opening prelude, in a march rhythm marked *allegro moderato*, scarcely hints at the energy and drama of the finale, marked *allegro energetico*. If you've only heard Bruch on recording, watch the soloist dig into the strings: this is music to play while tossing your hair.

The popularity of this showpiece has never flagged, especially with violin aficionados. Yet even with performances seemingly in every concert hall, Bruch suffered economic privation throughout his life. Small wonder he was embittered by this concerto's success. “Nothing compares with the laziness, stupidity and dullness of many German violinists,” he wrote to his publisher. “Every fortnight another one comes to me wanting to play the First Concerto; I have now become rude, and tell them: ‘I cannot listen to this concerto any more—did I perhaps write just one? Go away, and play my other concertos, which are just as good, if not better.’”

Happily, modern audiences can listen to it again and again, enjoying its emotional and melodic richness.

Ludwig van Beethoven

Born: 1770. Bonn, Germany

Died: 1827. Vienna, Austria

“Lento assai, cantante e tranquillo” from String Quartet No. 16

Composed: 1826

World premiere: March, 1828, performed by the Schuppanzigh Quartet

First Pacific Symphony performance: March 21, 2019, with Carl St.Clair conducting

Instrumentation: strings

Estimated duration: 23 minutes

Max Bruch

Born: 1838. Cologne, Germany

Died: 1920. Berlin, Germany

Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor

Composed: 1866

World premiere: April 24, 1866, with Bruch conducting

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Nov. 14, 2015, with Dan Zhu as soloist

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons; 4 horns, 2 trumpets; timpani; strings; solo violin

Estimated duration: 24 minutes

Felix Mendelssohn: **Symphony No. 4 in A Major, "Italian"**



In the 19th Century, traveling for pleasure was limited to a fortunate few—among them Felix Mendelssohn, whose wealthy family could afford every artistic and intellectual pursuit that interested

him. Travel was slow and lasted long in those days, and Felix kept a musical diary just as other refined travelers kept sketchbooks or painted watercolors. The compositions he based on these musical sketches are some of the most vivid examples of musical scene-painting in Western music. But even Mendelssohn enthusiasts can be confused by the titles of his travel-inspired works. His third symphony, "The Scottish," was not published until after the one catalogued as No. 4, "The Italian."

For both the "Italian" and "Scottish" symphonies, Mendelssohn's musical ideas were inspired by the grand tour of Europe that occupied the composer from 1829 to 1831. By then, Mendelssohn, around the age of today's college sophomore, was broadly educated and a mature composer. The idea of young composers from elsewhere in Europe honing their styles in Italy was more than a century old; even the culturally chauvinistic French sent their best and brightest to Italy for two years with the Prix de Rome.

Extensive travels in Italy and brilliant letters sent home to a musically gifted sister were among the many strange coincidences linking Mendelssohn and Mozart. Felix's letters reveal his euphoric embrace of Italian culture and landscape. In a February 1830 letter to his sister, Fanny, he references the "Italian" symphony: "It will be the jolliest piece I have ever done, especially the last movement. I have not found anything for the slow movement yet, and I think that I will save that for Naples." Yet despite the seeming effortless flow of the symphony's golden glow of its sound, its composition caused him grief. He did not finish it until March 1833, more than a year after returning from his grand tour, and even then was not satisfied with the result. He conducted the premiere in May of that year for the London Philharmonic Society, a performance that made the symphony an instant hit, yet roused in him pangs of doubt and regret. After revising it in 1834 he still was not satisfied, and never published it—which accounts for its late numeration.

What flaws could Mendelssohn possibly have heard in this apparently perfect work of art? We can only guess that some aspect of his Italian travels remained inchoate and unexpressed. But for listeners, the Italian Symphony seems to achieve the impossible, musically capturing the brilliance of sunshine and the vibrancy of wine.

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and Louisiana Philharmonic, and editor-in-chief for The Santa Fe Opera.

Felix Mendelssohn

Born: 1809. Hamburg, Germany

Died: 1847. Berlin, Germany

Symphony No. 4 in A Major, "Italian"

Composed: 1833

World premiere: May 13, 1833, with Mendelssohn conducting

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: Nov. 16, 2014, with Carl St.Clair conducting

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons; 2 horns, 2 trumpets; timpani; strings

Estimated duration: 27 minutes

PAUL HUANG

violin



Recipient of the prestigious 2015 Avery Fisher Career Grant and the 2017 Lincoln Center Award for Emerging Artists, violinist Paul Huang is quickly gaining attention for his eloquent music making,

distinctive sound and effortless virtuosity. *The Washington Post* described Huang as “an artist with the goods for a significant career” following his recital debut at the Kennedy Center.

His recent and forthcoming engagements include his recital debut at the Lucerne Festival in Switzerland as well as solo appearances with the Mariinsky Orchestra under Valery Gergiev (St. Petersburg’s White Nights Festival), Berliner Symphoniker with Lior Shambadal (Philharmonie Berlin debut), Detroit Symphony with Leonard Slatkin, Houston Symphony with Andres Orozco-Estrada, Orchestra of St. Luke’s with Carlos Miguel Prieto, Seoul Philharmonic with Markus Stenz and Taipei Symphony with Gilbert Varga (both in Taipei and on a U.S. tour). This season, he will also be making his Chicago orchestral debut at the Grant Park Music Festival, as well as appearances with the Buffalo Philharmonic and with the Baltimore, Alabama, Pacific, Santa Barbara, Charlotte and Taiwan’s National Symphony orchestras.

During the 2018-19 season, Huang will make debuts at the Hong Kong Bear’s Premiere Music Festival, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and return to the Palm Beach Chamber Music Society with the Emerson String Quartet and pianist Gilles Vonsattel for a performance of the Chausson Concerto for Violin, Piano and String Quartet. In addition, Huang continues his association with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Camerata Pacifica where he will present all three violin sonatas by Johannes Brahms.

Huang’s recent recital engagements included Lincoln Center’s “Great Performers” series and a return engagement at the Kennedy Center where he premiered Conrad Tao’s “Threads of Contact” for Violin and Piano during his recital evening with pianist Orion Weiss. He also stepped in for Midori with Leonard Slatkin and the Detroit Symphony to critical acclaim. Huang has also made debuts at the Wigmore Hall, Seoul Arts Center and the Louvre in Paris.

His first solo CD, *Intimate Inspiration*, is a collection of favorite virtuoso and romantic encore pieces released on the CHIMEI label. In association with Camerata Pacifica, he recorded “Four Songs of Solitude” for solo violin on their album of John Harbison works. The album was released on the Harmonia Mundi label in fall 2014.

A frequent guest artist at music festivals worldwide, he has performed at the Seattle, Music@Menlo, Caramoor, Bridgehampton, La Jolla, Moritzburg, Kissinger Sommer, Sion, Orford Musique and the Great Mountains Music Festival in Korea. His collaborators have included Gil Shaham, Cho-Liang Lin, Nobuko Imai, Lawrence Power, Maxim Rysanov, Mischa Maisky, Jian Wang, Frans Helmerson, Lynn Harrell, Yefim Bronfman and Marc-Andre Hamelin.

Winner of the 2011 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, Huang made critically acclaimed recital debuts in New York and in Washington, D.C. at the Kennedy Center. Other honors include First Prize at the 2009 International Violin Competition Sion-Valais (Tibor Varga) in Switzerland, the 2009 Chi-Mei Cultural Foundation Arts Award for Taiwan’s Most Promising Young Artists, the 2013 Salon de Virtuosi Career Grant and the 2014 Classical Recording Foundation Young Artist Award.

Born in Taiwan, Huang began violin lessons at the age of 7. He is a proud recipient of the inaugural Kovner Fellowship at The Juilliard School, where he earned his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees under Hyo Kang and I-Hao Lee. He plays on the 1742 ex-Wieniawski Guarneri del Gesù on loan through the generous efforts of the Stradivari Society of Chicago.



CARL ST.CLAIR

The 2018-19 season marks Music Director Carl St.Clair's 29th year leading Pacific Symphony. He is one of the longest-tenured conductors of the major American orchestras. St.Clair's lengthy history solidifies the strong relationship he has forged with the musicians and the community. His continuing role also lends stability to the organization and continuity to his vision for the Symphony's future. Few orchestras can claim such rapid artistic development as Pacific Symphony—the largest-budgeted orchestra formed in the United States in the last 50 years—due in large part to St.Clair's leadership.

During his tenure, St.Clair has become widely recognized for his musically distinguished performances, his commitment to building outstanding educational programs and his innovative approaches to programming. In April 2018, St.Clair led Pacific Symphony in its Carnegie Hall debut, as the finale to the Hall's yearlong celebration of pre-eminent composer Philip Glass' 80th birthday. He led Pacific Symphony on its first tour to China in May 2018, the orchestra's first international tour since touring Europe in 2006. The orchestra made its national PBS debut in June 2018 on "Great Performances" with Peter Boyer's *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, conducted

by St.Clair. Among St.Clair's many creative endeavors are the highly acclaimed American Composers Festival, which began in 2000; and the opera initiative, "Symphonic Voices," which continues for the eighth season in 2018-19 with Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, following the concert-opera productions of *The Magic Flute*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *La Traviata*, *Tosca* and *La Bohème* in previous seasons.

St.Clair's commitment to the development and performance of new works by composers is evident in the wealth of commissions and recordings by the Symphony. The 2016-17 season featured commissions by pianist/composer Conrad Tao and Composer-in-Residence Narong Prangcharoen, a follow-up to the recent slate of recordings of works commissioned and performed by the Symphony in recent years. These include William Bolcom's *Songs of Lorca* and *Prometheus* (2015-16), Elliot Goldenthal's *Symphony in G-sharp Minor* (2014-15), Richard Danielpour's *Toward a Season of Peace* (2013-14), Philip Glass' *The Passion of Ramakrishna* (2012-13), and Michael Daugherty's *Mount Rushmore* and *The Gospel According to Sister Aimee* (2012-13). St.Clair has led the orchestra in other critically acclaimed albums including two piano concertos of Lukas Foss; Danielpour's *An American*

Requiem and Goldenthal's *Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio* with cellist Yo-Yo Ma. Other commissioned composers include James Newton Howard, Zhou Long, Tobias Picker, Frank Ticheli, Chen Yi, Curt Cacioppo, Stephen Scott, Jim Self (Pacific Symphony's principal tubist) and Christopher Theofanidis.

In 2006-07, St.Clair led the orchestra's historic move into its home in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall at Segerstrom Center for the Arts. The move came on the heels of the landmark 2005-06 season that included St.Clair leading the Symphony on its first European tour—nine cities in three countries playing before capacity houses and receiving extraordinary responses and reviews.

From 2008-10, St.Clair was general music director for the Komische Oper in Berlin, where he led successful new productions such as *La Traviata* (directed by Hans Neuenfels). He also served as general music director and chief conductor of the German National Theater and Staatskapelle (GNTS) in Weimar, Germany, where he led Wagner's Ring Cycle to critical acclaim. He was the first non-European to hold his position at the GNTS; the role also gave him the distinction of simultaneously leading one of the newest orchestras in America and one of the oldest in Europe.

In 2014, St.Clair became the music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Costa Rica. His international career also has him conducting abroad several months a year, and he has appeared with orchestras throughout the world. He was the principal guest conductor of the Radio Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart from 1998-2004, where he completed a three-year recording project of the Villa-Lobos symphonies. He has also appeared with orchestras in Israel, Hong Kong, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South America, and summer festivals worldwide.

In North America, St.Clair has led the Boston Symphony Orchestra (where he served as assistant conductor for several years), New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic and the San Francisco, Seattle, Detroit, Atlanta, Houston, Indianapolis, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver symphonies, among many. A strong advocate of music education for all ages, St.Clair has been essential to the creation and implementation of the Symphony's education and community engagement programs including Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles, Heartstrings, Sunday Matinées, OC Can You Play With Us?, arts-X-press and Class Act.